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241 peach here more than in any other part; again all kitchen plants and melons of great size grow without cultivation. There are no gardens of flowers, but you find in the plains and in the woods quantities of lilies and of sweet-smelling roses. Mushrooms abound, and there is above all, one sort having a kind of white envelope which later bursts —it is an orange mushroom, and very tasty.

136 "All animals are found in this country with the exception of the camel, but not in such quantities as in other parts of Georgia; sheep, with and without the fat tail, and always with two and sometimes three or four lambs; they are not kept in flocks. . . . Wild animals abound, excepting the chamois and the hyena. . . . Bees are very profitable through their honey and their wax which is in abundance; the honey is very good, very white in some parts and as hard as sugar; this sort is called 'kripuji'. There are many reptiles and serpents which are not dangerous."[1]

133 Amier—"this side"—over the mountains of Likhi, is a land of different character. Long and narrow in its shape, not wide and fat, like Imier. To the north the ice-clad mountains of the Caucasus, to the south the formidable plateau of Armenia; to the west the rim of Likhi; and up this valley as up a corridor, the east wind blows from the Himalaya over the Central Asian steppe, and across the Caspian, dry and searing in the summer, loaded with hail and snow through the long winter. So that while men gather oranges "on that side" by the soft sea in the early spring, on "this side" they go with long poles[2] through the snow against the blizzard.

A great river flows through the land, the Cyrus or Kura which comes from the Georgian name *Mtkvari*—a name which the wise derive from the words for "river" of two different tribal stocks; from *mdinaré* = "flowing" or "river" of the Kartlians, and *a-kuara* = "the river" of the Abkhazians; thus bilingually *Mdinaré-a-kuara*—the river-river—"the flowing", the dominating stream, "the flux" in the life of the primitive tribes who gave the name.

The Mtkvari rises in the lake country south of Ardahani.

[134] "This country is entirely covered by rocks, comparatively high mountains, rough places and forests; it produces reeds and lilies; it contains rivers, springs and lakes, but few plains; cold in winter in certain parts, and with abundant snow. . . . The country produces all kinds of grains, but not everywhere . . . the fruits . . . are good and abounding . . . most of the flowers grow wild in the woods and on the mountains, and in certain localities the scent of the lilies pervades both the mountains and the plains . . .. the rivers are many and

[1] *Description géographique de la Géorgie par le Tsarévitch Wakhoucht.* Georgian text with French introduction and interleaved translation by M. F. Brosset, Spb. 1842, pp. 339-43 (reference, Wakhushti).

[2] Cf. Strabo, XI, xiv, 4.

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great, and of rapid current; the springs are beautiful, delicious and health-giving; the lakes are good and full of fish." [1] 133

In these parts the Mtkvari takes its strength; then flows at first from south to north

"now with a strong current . . . through a rocky ravine full of stones"

until below Ardahani its course becomes

"peaceable—and sinuous, because of the plains. It is full of fish—trout above all, big and little, abound up towards the mountains. The water is here better to drink than lower down." [2]

By Akhaltzikhé, the Mtkvari turns west to east, cutting a long gorge through the mountains, overhung on its left bank by the peaks of Likhi and bound on its right by the lesser ranges of Trialeti. The highest peak of Likhi, Makhvilo, "*the Pointed One*", overlooks from some distance this gorge now called Borjomi, this one pass into the valley of Amier.

Through the mountains, the Mtkvari curves eastward and south-eastward, going easily, in leisurely way across its long plain between the Caucasus and the Armenian Mountains. It spreads itself in places now to eighty yards and more across, and forms shallows where it pours past rapidly enough; here again it flows more slowly in a deeper bed.

"In some places steep rocks are found along its bank, but for the most part there are to be seen forests, grassy tracts and reed patches all abounding in wild-fowl and game. The most savoury fishes are caught by nets and other means. . . . Sometimes they fish sturgeon, which spawn below the region of Ganja, but which cannot go higher up because of the current." [3] [136]

Rafts only can make the upper course, bringing the timber of the mountains down to the open plains; but lower, 150 miles before the Caspian, large sailing-boats may ply, drawing up to three feet of water. Low down, 100 miles from the Caspian, the Araks, great river of the Armenians, coming out of the high mountain, Dévé Boyun, the Camel's Back, just east of Erzerum (and the Camel's Back forms also the water-shed of the western Euphrates) flows in to join the Mtkvari, and the united waters find a double mouth along the sandy foreshore of the Caspian.

Thus the Mtkvari—"the flowing"—the "river" bears down the thawed snows of the lake-country, cuts through the mountains and turns into the long plain to take the streams

[1] Wakhushti, pp. 76–9. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 80–1. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 135–7.

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WEALTH AND STATE

The eastern Caucasus had been famous at least from Achæmenian times as the land of natural fires, and the neighbouring Persian province had borrowed the fame in its name Azerbaijan—*ader-badagan*, the "garden of fire". From the early days of the Arab rule in Shirvan extensive industrial use was made of the petroleum of the Apsheron peninsula. el-Masudi speaks of Baku and "the Naptha country", and Yakuti, himself a native of the place, states that two hundred mule loads a day were, in his time, exported. Marco Polo, who did not himself pass through the Caucasus, had heard tell of Baku oil.

> "On the confines towards Georgiana", he says, "there is a fountain from which oil springs in great abundance, insomuch that a hundred shiploads might be taken from it at one time. This oil is not good to use with food, but it's good to burn and is also used to anoint camels that have the mange. People come from a vast distance to fetch it, for in all the countries round, they have no other oil." [1]

Barbaro's description is as usual distinguished by a certain crude realism in detail.

> "Upon this side of the sea there is another citie called Bachu, whereof the sea of Bachu taketh name, neere unto which citie, there is a mountaigne that casteth foo'the blacke oyle stynkeng horryblye, which they nevertheless use for furnissheng of their lightes, and for the anoynteng of their camells, twies a yere. For if they were not anoynted they wolde become skabbie." [2]

Among products of a more special character, the people of the Caucasus were noted for their caviar,[3] their armour and their falcons. In parts of Daghestan, according to el-Masudi, "*most of the inhabitants are employed in making coats of mail, stirrups, bridles, swords and similar instruments of iron*".[4] Marco Polo had heard the fame of the bowmen of Georgia, and el-Masudi records that from the district of Shulaveri on the Armenian marches, came the prized battle-axes called "Shulaverdian"—"*which are in use with the Sid'bibah and other Barbarian corps*".[5] Again, Polo says of Georgia, that "*the country produces the best goshawks in the world, which are called Avigbi*",[6] and el-Masudi has a dissertation on the falcons of the Caspian coasts and of Armenia.

[1] Polo (Yule), I, 46.
[2] Barbaro, 38.
[3] el-Masudi, I, 438.
[4] *Idem*, I, 433.
[5] *Idem*, I, 461, see *Encyclopædia of Islam* under Seyabidja, article by G. Fernand, who states that these people were pre-Islamic emigrants from Sumatra to India, and later to Iraq. They were generally employed by the Arabs as guards and gaolers.
[6] Polo (Yule), I, 50.

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●136 "In this sea", he says, "are islands opposite the coast of Jorjan, where a sort of white falcons are caught. These falcons are soon made tame; and one has little to fear that they will associate (with the wild birds); but they are rather weak, for the sportsmen who catch them in these islands feed them with fish; and if any other food is given to them, they become reduced in strength. Men who distinguish themselves by their knowledge of falconry, and of the different sorts of rapacious birds which have been employed for the same purpose, among the Persians, Turks, Byzantines, Hindus and Arabs, say that falcons of a white colour are quickest and handsomest; that they have the best shape and chest; and that they are soonest tamed, and the strongest of all falcons to rise in the air; that they have the longest breath, and fly furthest, for they are very light and spirited, and they have a hotter temper than any other species of falcons. The difference of colour depends upon the difference of climate. Hence they are of pure white in Armenia, in the country of the Khazar, in Jorjan, and the neighbouring countries of the Turks, on account of the great fall of snow in these climates." [1]

439 The Arab writers pay little attention to the western parts of the Caucasus, since the Euxine trade had little concern for them. They note only the names of the declining ports along the coast from Trebizond to the entry of the Sea of Azov. Phasis and Dioscurias had certainly lost much of their importance. Imier—"that side"—beyond the Mountains of Likhi and the marches of the Muslim—had been desolated in the long wars between the fifth and the eighth centuries; and the life of Georgia was growing young again, in the rock-bound fastnesses of Samtzkhé. Yet an extensive find—at the small roadstead of Arkhavé in Lazistan—of gold and silver coins minted in the cities of Islam—tells of the constant come and go of trade between the provinces of the Caliph and the independent parts of Georgia, during the generations when strife was continuing in perpetual iteration.

The coins found at Arkhavé all date to the beginning of the ninth century, and are *dirhems* minted at Baghdad, Muhammadiah, in Armenia, at Kufa, at Basra, in Aran, at Balkh, in Africa, at Harunabad, Ray and Kirman.[2] This was the circulation of trade under the great Caliphs—from Africa and Balkh to Lazica. Sargis Tmogveli, three centuries later, recalls the fame of it when he exclaims:

> *"Thou art master of Eran and T'uran; from China to Qirovan, all is thine and under thy command."* [3]

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[1] el-Masudi, I, 423.

[2] Pakhomov, p. 55; cf. ibn-Haukal, p. 163: "In Azerbaijan and Aran and Armenia, gold and silver coins are current."

[3] *Visramiani*, p. 160, Qirovan is Kerouan in Tunisia.

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the Mountains of Likhi in far better state than were Kartli and Kakheti. Coming from Astrakhan, the mission in company with a Georgian emissary on his way home from Moscow, crossed the mountains through the Balkar country. In Kutais they conducted protracted business with King Alexander III, the patron of the Dominican Castelli, and they followed his court to Skanda; they also saw the exiled King Taymuraz I of Kakheti, whose fortunes had ebbed even lower than when Mishetski saw him, and to whom Alexander had allotted a country estate in Radsha. The Russian mission passed through a prosperous and thriving countryside, and they remarked the numerous castles, fortified manors, the stone and timber churches, and the many villages with their scattered dwellings lying among gardens, orchards and vineyards. Tolochanov gives a long description of Kutais where he greatly admired the palaces and churches; he visited Gelati and noted carefully, with the interest of a reverend Russian, the most famous of the icons which were shown for the edification of the distinguished foreigners. Tolochanov made what was nothing less than a detailed survey of the country, and he reports information supplied to him by Pashenga (Peshangi) the King's secretary, which may indeed have been prepared with the object of creating a favourable impression on him.[1] According to Peshangi, the important *mtavarni* of Imereti numbered over 100, and there were more than 1,100 *aznaurni* subject either to the Crown or to the different *mtavarni*. The figures given by Peshangi indicate that a full levy of the Kingdom would put about 15,000 men into the field,[2] in addition to the royal forces which were permanently maintained and which numbered 3,000 men. The King's personal serfs, including the people of Kutais, Skanda and other smaller towns, were given by Peshangi as 60,000. Tolochanov reports the crops as wheat, barley, spelt, millet, beans, peas, springcorn, hemp and others, and he states that cereals were gathered twice in the summer. Silkworms were cultivated in almost every home; there were iron-mines in the country and some fagotted iron was produced; copper was plentiful and natural saltpetre was found in the mountains. There were cattle and fowl of all kinds in abundance, and among wild animals he noted deer, elk, roebuck, wild pigs and goats, beavers, otters, foxes, lynx, wolves and rabbits.

[1] Polievktov, *Tolochanov*, pp. 186 *et seq.*

[2] Taking an average of more than 10 serfs to each of the *aznaurni*. Peshangi's statement that 40,000 men could be brought out, seems an obvious exaggeration to impress Tolochanov.